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Memorial Address on William McKinley.

Very truly,

BEN W. HOSMER.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

On the Life and
Character of

William McKinley

DELIVERED AT
HOOPLE, N. D.

September 19th, 1901

BY

BEN. W. HOSMER.

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To my friends and daily associates at Hoople and vicinity, whose appreciation of my efforts to appropriately honor the memory of our late lamented President is sincerely acknowledged, this little volume is gratefully inscribed,

By the Author,

BEN W. HOSMER.

PUBLISHER'S NOTICE:

When the news was flashed over the country that President McKinley was dead, probably none of our western communities responded to the universal sorrow with more promptness and sincere devotion than did the people of the little village of Hoople, situated amid beautiful surroundings of timber and prairie in the heart of the Red River Valley. Their public hall was artistically decorated with flowers and drapery and the various insignia of mourning. On the day appointed for the funeral appropriate and touching exercises were held, and the whole population turned out to give expression to their grief.

The author of the following pages is one of the younger members of the bar in his judicial district, and was called upon to deliver an address suitable to the sad and memorable occasion; and the production of this little book is the result of his efforts to pronounce appropriate eulogy upon the life and character of our noble and illustrious president, and in response to the repeated and urgent requests of his friends for its publication.

Hoople, N. Dak., Jan. 1st, A. D. 1902.

Our Martyred President.

"It is God's way.
His Will be done, not ours."

ANOTHER illustrious ruler has fallen. For the third time in a generation we bewail the untimely death of a president. He who seemed to be with us but yesterday, in the fulness of life's joys, in the plenitude of his power, now lies cold in the stillness of death. Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley—the noble triumvirate of historic martyrdom—Lincoln, the victim of the last struggling agonies of expiring rebellion; Garfield, sacrificed on the altar of political vengeance; McKinley, smitten by the poisonous serpent of anarchy.

To-day we witness a most awful spectacle; a tragedy more startling, more terrible in its import, has

never yet overwhelmed the heart of humanity. Political revolution moving in its resistless course over the land could not have stirred the souls of men more profoundly. The very thought of it is more horrifying than the images of the most hideous nightmare. A fiendish and diabolical act—at the seat of a great exposition, designed to bring into more harmonious relations all the peoples of this hemisphere, to illustrate the marvelous advances of modern industry and invention, to promote the peace, prosperity and happiness of the civilized world, our eyes behold the tragic scene.

Words of wisdom and a grand message of love and universal peace had but a brief time before been delivered from the taintless lips of our president; and as we see him bending his dignified form to clasp in fraternal greeting the outstretched hands of his countrymen, and a little child has just departed from his benign presence, he is suddenly smitten to earth by the red hand of murder.

By a most remarkable coincidence, and as if de-

signed to impress upon us more deeply the solemn lessons and suggestions of this hour, we are now assembled, fellow citizens, on the anniversary of another sad and mournful day, when on the distant shores of the Atlantic seas the spirit of the noble-hearted Garfield took its flight from earth. Before the hour of midnight on the nineteenth day of September, eighteen hundred and eighty-one, after weeks and months of agony and heroic struggle, and within sight of the ocean's "heaving billows," he breathed his last.

But, is McKinley dead? Is Garfield dead? Is Lincoln dead? From all things earthly they have seemingly passed away. But to us, their adoring and lamenting countrymen, they still live in the bright example of their grand and consecrated lives. They live in the influence which their careers, their principles, their opinions, now exercise, and will continue to exercise in the affairs of men. "A superior and commanding human intellect, a truly great man, when Heaven vouchsafes so rare a gift, is not a temporary flame burning bright for a while and then expiring, giving place

to returning darkness. It is rather a spark of fervent heat, as well as a radiant light, with power to enkindle the common mass of human mind; so that, when it glimmers in its own decay, and finally goes out in death, no night follows, but it leaves the world all light, all on fire, from the potent contact of its own spirit."

Time does not permit, nor indeed does the occasion specially require, that we dwell long upon the striking events of our late president's illustrious career. They are known to us all. His public life, his heroic devotion to duty, had their inception before he had fairly reached the threshold of manhood. In the dark days of '61, in response to the appeals of our first great martyr, we behold him with shouldered musket marching manfully down to the scenes of war; and on the battle-fields of his country he consecrated his ardent and patriotic heart in a baptism of fire. In the councils of state, in the halls of national legislation, in the executive chair of his home state, and in the loftiest position in the gift of

his countrymen he has reached his proud eminence. To-day the remembrance of him commands universal respect, inspires the admiration and appeals to the sympathy, of the whole world. His prophetic wisdom, his patriotic spirit, his sincere and steadfast devotion to every duty of life, his kind and fatherly disposition, his unselfish regard for his aged parents, to the last moment of their lives, his sweet fellowship with his kindred everywhere, his bosom companionship, his manly affection, his tender, oh, so sweet and enrapturing love—unpolluted by the slightest taint of bestiality—his constant tenderness and solicitude for the delicate angel companion of all his manhood years, whom he cherished and adored above all earthly treasures, and for whose sake, if need be, he would gladly have abandoned all the allurements of earthly ambition, and in ministering to whose comfort, joy and happiness he experienced his keenest felicity; his incorruptible honor, his devout christian manhood, his calm dignity, his noble fortitude, his disregard of self, his anxious thoughtfulness

of others, his soldiery and heroic conduct in the last hours of conscious existence, his steadfast trust in Almighty God—these are the qualities which inspire within us unspeakable love for him. By his admirable characteristics exhibited in the varied relations of strong and active manhood, his heroism when suddenly prostrated, wounded and bleeding, amid the scenes of that awful tragedy, in which he was the Hamlet—the central, the commanding figure—he reveals in striking relief qualities which had hitherto remained hidden from the sight of man, not paraded to the public gaze, but cherished within his heart. In the sudden and astounding revelation of such lofty motives we are seized with emotions which leap the very bounds of our admiration, and we stand appalled, as if transfixed by the magic wand of Divinity.

Think of it, my friends, has such another marvelous scene been presented to the eyes of mortal man since the Saviour of the world thrilled humanity with his matchless words and deeds of miraculous wonder? In imagination we picture the scenes sur-

rounding the last days of William McKinley's career, with his beautiful and cherished wife restored to him after the painful tour to the Pacific coast. She seemed to him, and to all who had anxiously watched with him at her bedside, as if snatched from the very clutches of death. Again in sweet companionship with her, doubly dear to him for the crisis through which she has safely passed, we behold him, this venerable ruler, stepping down from the stately mansion of power, to greet once more the hosts of his devoted countrymen. At the great exposition the enthusiastic throngs are thrilled by his venerable presence, charmed by his courtly manners, inspired with confidence and exultation by his good will for all, for his wise and statesmanlike declarations, his expressions of sincere gratitude at his warm welcome by the citizens, giving renewed and added proof of his great goodness of heart, his lively sympathy for all.

And when the awful assault was made, that robbed us of our inestimable treasure, behold how heroically he meets his untimely doom. He still stands like a

soldier at his post, though pierced by mortal wounds, and suffering the most excruciating agony.

Supported by his attendants, he walks upright to a seat near at hand, and to his private secretary, who bends in ministering devotion over the now prostrate form of his beloved chief, the president gasps in piteous tones, "My wife; be careful about her; don't let her know." And as he yields momentarily to his extreme agony and again rises above his distressing pain, and his eyes open, and he sees the infuriated and horror-stricken mob pouncing with mingled grief, indignation, and horror, upon the assassin, almost beside themselves with rage at the unprovoked attack, he calmly yet earnestly and with unexampled charity, and in words of benevolence, implores those about him, "Let no one hurt the man;" and as the multitude, crazed by their heart-rending emotions, look upon his quivering form, as he bears up so nobly in the trying ordeal, upon the pale countenance with features still kindling with benignity, even in his extreme agony, no wonder they involuntarily ex-

claim—"He is a soldier." Yes, he was a soldier in the broadest and highest meaning in which the term can be interpreted. And in his stricken condition he yet commanded, and the storm of angry and contending passions which raged about him became subdued. When he was carried to the hospital no complaint escaped him, but he thoughtfully observed, "I am sorry to have been a cause of trouble to the exposition." And when his delicate wife was brought to his bedside, recalling uppermost in his mind the fearful crisis through which she had recently passed, and in a boundless sympathy for her he said, "This is not our first battle."

We need not dwell upon the political principles which our late president was accustomed to advocate in his public career. Some of them are still of a mooted character, and far be it from the sacred objects of this occasioa and its heartrending associations to suggest by the slightest word or comment the language of controversy. He was the president of no creed, faction or party, and his sympathies and con-

stant solicitude reached to the farthest limits of the republic over which he ruled. Gladly would he, even in his candidacy for his exalted office, have avoided any bitter antagonism of partisanship. He represented the whole country. He aimed to rule with impartiality, avoiding as far as possible any occasion for serious differences. Conciliatory in his communications, he was yet firm and resolute in carrying out the mandates of his convictions. His administration by common assent has been marvelously successful. The solemn pledges under which he was elected to the chief magistracy have been faithfully kept. Within the brief time that has elapsed since his second inauguration the country has been becoming rapidly settled into a state of universal harmony and good feeling unprecedented by any era since the historic times of James Monroe. When the president delivered his last address not a cloud darkened the political horizon; never was he more able, more statesmanlike, in his delivery. His last words have the ringing note of a splendid valedictory;

one that could scarcely have been more appropriate in its sentiment had he known it would be his last formal declaration on earth. "Our earnest prayer is that God will graciously vouchsafe prosperity, happiness and peace to all our neighbors and like blessings to all the peoples and powers of earth." In no other public utterance did he manifest more profoundness of wisdom, more true nobility of character.

But great as he was in life, surpassingly great was he in death. And as he takes his departure from the scenes of time and enters the dark valley of the shadow of death, he discloses most signally qualities of his character not hitherto prominently exhibited. He was a christian soldier of the loftiest type. When the anæsthetic was administered, not knowing but that consciousness might never return, he murmured inaudibly to all but the physician who bent over his prostrate form, "Thy Kingdon come, Thy will be done." In all the days of anxious solicitude, when a nation watched prayerfully at the pale sufferer's bedside, and we trembled as we awaited the latest tid-

ings, with an anxiety that could scarcely have been surpassed if our own fates had hung in the uncertain balance, he alone was unshaken. He quailed not at the shadow of his impending fate. Where does history record the incidents of a death scene more grand and sublime? The Father of his Country did not surpass, by his heroic conduct in the hour of death, the marvelous sublimity of William McKinley. "Nearer My God to Thee, Nearer to Thee. Good by all. Good bye. It is God's way. His will be done, not ours." And as his consecrated soul was wafted into the realms of eternity, and winged its upward flight to the throne of its God, methinks there was a scene of triumph, beyond the darkness of the Vale, grander than any ecstasy of success that had attended the manifold achievements of his brilliant career upon earth; indefinitely surpassing any spectacle of grandeur that has ever followed the homeward march of the mightiest earthly conqueror.

My friends, we feel that on this occasion, although the saddest in which many of us have ever been called

upon to participate, that it is after all exceedingly good to be here. We are met in obedience to the solemn proclamation of our new chief magistrate, that we "bow down in submission to the will of Almighty God, and pay out of full hearts our homage of love and reverence to the great and good President whose death has smitten the nation with great grief"

Glowing words of eulogy will be proclaimed all over the land today in richer abundance than has ever yet been known. The esteem and love in which all sections and classes held our lamented president testify to his worth and greatness as a man and a ruler. When Lincoln died the severed bonds of national unity were just being successfully restored after their awful rending in the struggles of a gigantic war. The bitterest feeling prevailed between the North and the South, and the unfathomed gulf which so long separated us had not been completely filled when William McKinley became president of the United States. But under his wise and beneficent rule that awful chasm has absolutely disappeared. North and South

are today harmoniously reunited, and drink in the fountains of fellowship and good will. The soil that drank so deeply from the life-blood of the noblest of the land is today moistened by the flowing tears of the countless multitudes who weep in stricken grief at the bier of William McKinley. But, Oh! the habiliments of woe, where that loved face was so often beheld, in the walks of private life and amid the scenes of public care; on the broad avenues of Washington, at the seat of executive power and responsibility, and among his daily associates, within the ever welcoming gates of Canton—the scenes of his earliest triumphs —where he laid deep and enduring the foundations of his public career; where that smiling, genial face scattered sunshine and made glad the hearts of old and young in his daily intercourse with them; within the hospitable doors of that now darkened home, the shrine of his devotion; in the great cities, in the centers of industry, where the toiling thousands have so often looked into that noble countenance, and listened with rapture to the music of that voice which is today

hushed in the dark solitude of the tomb—who can console them, or stop the pangs of their quaking hearts? The angelic wife, bereft of the noblest, the truest, the knightliest, the tenderest of companions—let a nation feel it a precious privilege to weep with her.

Today industry is at a stand. The multitudinous sons of toil, whose welfare he ever labored to promote, will shed copious tears of manly grief as they gather about and look for the last time on his face. Little children who have so often felt the warm pressure of that fatherly hand will mingle their tears with the tides of grief that cover the land. Beautiful flowers that are everywhere deposited as the sweet, modest emblems of love are bedewed with the moisture of heartrending bereavement; but from the altar of our united devotion there will arise sweet odors more fragrant than "incense kindled at the muses' flame." Monuments will rise to commemorate our noble dead; and the sculptor's hand will preserve his form in faultless symmetry. But the grandest monument

that can be erected to the name of William McKinley will not be one of stone. It will be infinitely more enduring. Broader than the ever widening limits of this republic, more lasting than the rock beneath its soil, loftier than the dome of the vaulting skies. Monuments of stone may indeed endure; they may stand throughout countless ages, undisturbed in the solidity of their massive structure, fit emblems of glorious events, or the illustrious lives which they commemorate. But none of these are proof against the destroying hand of Time. The lightning's bolt may cleave their chiseled and polished surfaces. The undulations of the earthquake may heave their foundations and cause their stately columns to totter and fall to the earth; the cyclone's resistless fury may rend their massive blocks asunder; and through the revolutions of countless ages the fragments of granite may be crumbled to dust, and in Time's crucible be reduced to the molecular forms of their original elements.

And how shall we build a more lasting and endur-

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ing monument to the name of William McKinley? We can do it by cultivating within us all the admirable qualities that entered into his character; by practicing every good habit and every good principle that animated his life.

Public officials may not rise to his heights of statesmanship and genius of leadership, but they must not fall below his standard of duty and obligation. The ambitious young man, vaulting into the arena of active life, and emulous of William McKinley, and the high and responsible offices which he so acceptably filled, must be fired with an ardent and steadfast zeal to rise to the serene level of his exalted manhood; to feel in every waking moment within his innermost heart of hearts that it is better by far to possess a character like that of William McKinley than to be president of the United States. We must all labor in the construction of this monument as though its success depended primarily upon our supreme individual efforts. The adage is a wise one which says, "Heaven helps those who helps themselves." But

we must build our memorial shaft by strenuous daily toil and,

> "Count that day lost whose low descending sun
> Views from thy hand no worthy action done."

Every child that performs his or her daily tasks with cheerful obedience, and shuns the ways of sin, and goes about performing little deeds of kindness, speaking little words of love, will surely aid in the building of this monument. Every father who, with diligent solicitude watches over and guides the little footsteps of those dependent upon his constant care, will assist most powerfully in its construction. Sweet motherhood needs not to be reminded that her part will be the holiest mission among all the builders.

And if thou art a husband forget not the sacred vows that bind thee to the clinging partner of life's toil's, its joys and its griefs, and study to comprehend the domestic life of William McKinley. Imitate his love, sweeter to the last moment of his conscious existence than all other earthly joys. If thou art a young man, and hast not yet taken a cherished

partner unto thy bosom, banish every youthful folly, make every manly virtue a habit before entering upon the sacred obligations of husband and father. The little word, "cherish," let gently fall from the lips of a dear and mutual friend of William McKinley and Ida Saxton on the eve of their marriage sank deep into his manly heart and has borne the fruits of true domestic felicity. And the lesson it teaches is a simple one: "Go and do thou likewise." And if thou art one of the hoary patriarchs of the land, with the flakes of advancing years falling gently about thee, withhold not thy wise counsels from us, but dispense them freely and graciously that we may all profit abundantly thereby. And let us all remember to practice more fully, as did our immortal president, all the principles of true christianity, and become more ardent followers of Our Father in Heaven. By so doing we shall be able to realize the spotless character of William McKinley. Then when our summons comes to enter the dark valley, and be joined to the innumerable host, it will be without fear or trem-

bling, for we shall be "sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust."

And as the glorious monument progresses we shall move upward with it into sublimer heights of glory; and we shall behold far below us in the darkening distance, consumed in the lurid flames of their own horrid lusts, the tottering strongholds of satanic power, crumbling into the dust of annihilation.

The hours of this sad and memorable day are rapidly flying. We need never hope to behold their return. Like the earthly career of him we so bitterly lament, they cannot be recalled; but let the lessons of the hour sink deep into our hearts; let their solemn import be deeply and powerfully felt; and we shall not retire from this occasion without a profound and steadfast conviction of the duties which have devolved upon us.

And when the memorial which we have so devoutly pledged ourselves to rear in commemoration of the great departed has risen far above the azure dome—an obelisk of perfect symmetry, of fadeless

beauty—until its summit is illuminated by the light which surrounds the gateway of the Celestial City, we shall reap our reward. As its devoted builders lift the capstone to its place and raise their eyes in rapturous triumph upon the scene, they will behold near at hand, with no intervening gulf, the goal of their pilgrimage. And as the column of patient toilers moves forward in soldierly order, to receive their reward, each and all will be welcomed into the matchless presence of their Lord. One by one shall all we be finally greeted by the joyous admonition, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And as we pass on to the scene of our final triumph, we shall at last behold the forms of our noble martyrs, clothed in the white robes of immortality, standing there, their faces radiant with the light of divinity, to greet us and welcome us all into the Heavenly Republic.

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